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ORD-1502-76

14 July 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Establishment of a Futures Research Program in
the Agency

1. The attachment provides a rationale for establishing a Futures Research Program in the Agency. The program consists of a number of externally supported research projects which are designed to support a broadly based effort in long-range forecasting and planning. Such a program is not guaranteed to clearly define the future. It is, however, designed to identify the limits within which we will be operating, thus helping to reduce uncertainties facing policy makers and resource planners.

2. The program is in the initial stages of planning. Additional projects may be added and/or substituted for those now included in the program. I would appreciate your comments and suggestions about the program.

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PAS/ORD

Attachment
as stated

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Problems Analysis Staff/ORD

This paper provides some initial views on the establishment of a Futures Research Program in the Agency. In general, such a program would focus on the nature of change in the 5 through 20 year time frame. The program would consist of a number of research projects in long-range forecasting and planning.

Some projects would be concerned with the dynamics of change worldwide while others would assess change with respect to specific issues. Several research approaches would be employed including scenario writing, issue analysis, and global modeling.

Emphasis would be placed on how long-range forecasts and analyses could be used by analysts, estimators, and resource planners and managers. In this regard the Intelligence Community Staff's Office for Policy and Planning has expressed, in a letter (11 Feb 76) to D/ORD, continuing interest in on-going work with regard to the "projection of world trends and parameters which are expected to be predominant in the 1980's and a model for integrating these factors into national intelligence planning."

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A research program in the futures field¹ would provide long-range views, i.e., from 5 through 20 years on a variety of topics of importance to intelligence. Such views would consist of ideas or events indicative of a trend or some discontinuity in the social, political, technological, or economic environment. They would sensitize analysts, estimators, policy makers, and resource planners to think about the impact of the future on their products and policy decisions.

For analysts and estimators the trends would serve as inputs to long-range analytic products and estimates. These analyses would tend to alert policy makers of possible future occurrences, thereby enabling them to sharpen near-term (1-5 years) policy decisions. Knowledge about changing world conditions would permit managers to plan in a more meaningful way how intelligence resources should be distributed in order to cope with possible long-term intelligence needs.

Trying to forecast the long-range future (six years or more) is tricky business. Many believe that long-range forecasting is not possible because of man's inherent

¹According to Dr. Roy Amara, President, Institute for the Future, the futures field can be characterized generally in two ways:

1. "Any systematic attempt to improve our understanding of the future consequences of present developments and choices, and
2. Any efforts to systematize our assumptions and perceptions about the future."

Note: "Futures Field" (or futures) is used synonymously with "futurism," "futuology," or "futuristics." "Futures research" is used to denote the research or analytical arm of the futures field. Approved For Release 2004/12/21 : CIA-RDP91M00696R000200080028-7

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inability to describe the future with any credibility. Even when future scenarios are provided they are suspect because of the questionable quality of the data used or because of the biases of the individuals who produced the scenarios. Even when scenarios are reasonably well received others argue that their usefulness is limited with respect to planning the allocation of resources because of the short time horizons usually involved in most planning activities.

Although projecting futures is no easy matter, there are certain procedures that can be used to develop a plausible range of alternative futures. With a "likely future" one can begin to think about the anticipated roles of intelligence and the policies needed to counteract some of the more likely problem areas.

A review of the literature suggests that interest and activity in long-range forecasting and planning has increased considerably in recent years in many corporations, institutions, and public organizations. Such activities increasingly are viewed in terms of anticipating as early as possible changes and potential problems in political, economic, technical, and military conditions in order to provide improved guidance to policy makers and those who plan future resource utilization.

The overall objective of the Futures Research Program would be to sensitize policy makers and intelligence resource

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planners to the long-range future. Other objectives would be:

- To produce credible profiles of the future,
- To employ currently available forecasting approaches for scenario development,
- To develop options for linking long-range views to resource planning activities,
- To simplify the presentation of scenarios,
- To encourage the incorporation of long-range views into intelligence estimates,
- To study ways by which long-range views can be used to enhance foreign policy determination,
- To work toward the establishment of a "futures group" within the Agency to provide long-range views for incorporation into estimates and as inputs to resource planning decisions.
- To continuously review meetings, research developments, approaches, views, and literature with respect to state-of-the-art in the futures field.

Projects which would be included in the Futures Research Program are listed in the following table. They would consist of scenario writing which is both worldwide and focused. Some scenario projects would require formal models; others would not. Most projects would stress policy analysis and the determination of decision options. Many would focus on the utilization of results for planning purposes. A key aspect would be the development of approaches for using long-range forecasting and scenario results in near-term budget planning actions.

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The listing is followed by brief explanations of each project. Some of the projects would be doable with off-the-shelf approaches and have quick turn around times. Others would will require exploratory research. All projects to some extent would require inputs and review by substantive experts within the intelligence community. This means that the projects would require some sort of interdisciplinary approach in order to acquire the necessary data inputs and to provide comprehensive analysis with respect to the long-range period.

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<u>PROJECT</u>	<u>DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>FUNDS (K)</u> <u>FY-77 FY-78</u>	<u>POTENTIAL</u> <u>CONTRACTORS</u>	25X1
Future Events Identification	Listing of events which might occur in the 5 to 20 year period which might impact US foreign policy. Identification of indicators for each event or class of events. Relate to resource planning activities.			
Worldwide Scenario I. (no model)	Develop broad brush 20 year scenario. Identify implications for intelligence and relate to resource planning activities.			
Worldwide Scenario II. (model)	Using modeling approach produce 3 likely worldwide scenarios. Through simulation examine <u>US policy options</u> .			
Specific Issues(s) Scenario I. (no model)	Create 20 year scenarios on a specific topic, i.e., terrorism, growing US-USSR interdependence. Identify <u>policy options</u> .			

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FUTURES RESEARCH PROGRAMPROJECT NO. 1: FUTURE EVENTS IDENTIFICATION

The purpose of this project is to identify the principal events which may impact the U.S. in the long-range period, i.e., from 5 through 20 years. The events would be sociopolitical, socioeconomic, technical, or military in nature. They would be global, national, or regional. Some would be surprise-free with a high probability of occurrence; others would be unpredictable. The unpredictable events would possess some probability of occurrence in the 5-20 year period. They all would be considered important for the world's future.

Once the events are determined, the next step would consist of the identification of early warning indicators associated with each event. The indicators will facilitate the analysis of activities which may precede the occurrence of the event.

The last phase of the study would develop ways of linking the events and their indicators to the near-term budget decision making process.

Tasks

1. Identify events of importance to intelligence which might occur in the long-range period, i.e., from 5 through 20 years. Specify events for the 5-10, 10-15 and 15-20 year periods.

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2. Describe early warning indicators for each event.
3. Identify ways of linking future events and respective early warning indicators to near-term budget decision making.

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FUTURES RESEARCH PROGRAMPROJECT NO. 2: WORLDWIDE SCENARIO I.

(NO MODEL)

This project focuses on the development of a likely long-range scenario (5-20 years) without the use of computerized models. The scenario is to be global in nature and contain surprise-free occurrences as well as discontinuities or surprises.

Although global scenarios are produced on a continuing basis, they are not very useful as inputs to either long-range intelligence estimates or intelligence resource planning activities. Part of the reason is that most scenarios are lengthy word descriptions of the future. This tends to detract from their usefulness. Another reason is that while the scenarios may be interesting reading the contents are not focused enough to be of much use as an input to an estimate on a specific topic. Thus, an important part of this project will explore unique ways of presenting scenarios.

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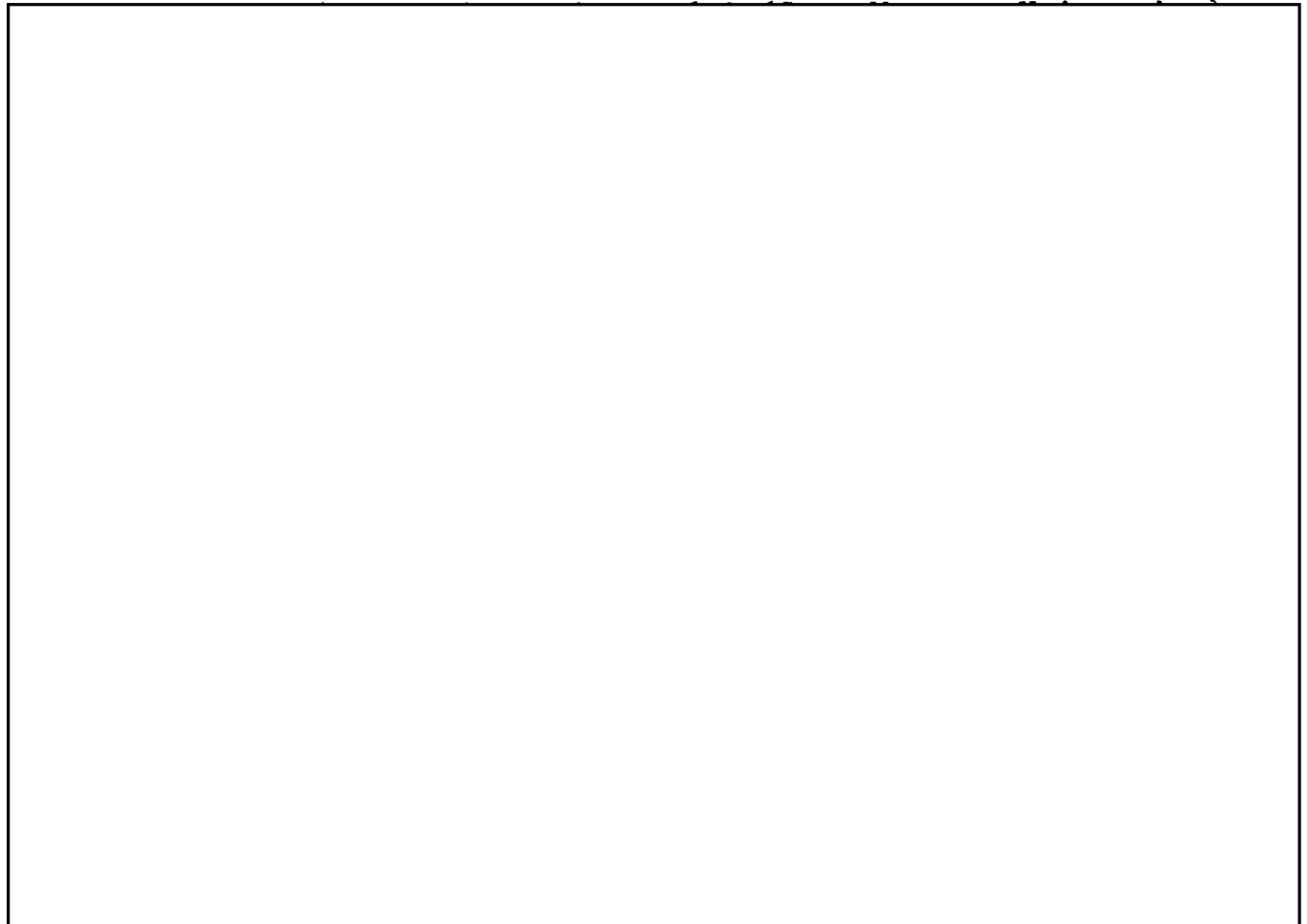
FUTURES RESEARCH PROGRAM

PROJECT NO. 3: WORLDWIDE SCENARIO II

(WITH MODEL)

This project focuses on the development of a plausible long-range scenario with the aid of a currently developed computerized global model. An existing model such as

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- Perspective by Subject

Socioeconomic
Sociopolitical
Military/Technical

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FUTURES RESEARCH PROGRAM

PROJECT NO. 4: ISSUE SCENARIO I

(NO MODEL)

The purpose of this project is to develop plausible scenarios with respect to a specific issue. This project is similar to Project No. 2 except that it is focused on an issue. Potential issues are: 1) growing US-USSR interdependence, 2) terrorism in the future, 3) changing wills

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The time horizon for the scenarios would be 5-20 years. For each scenario principal events would be identified which would be expected to occur in the future. Early warning indicators would be identified which would characterize movement toward each of the identified events.

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